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A

# SERMON,

PREACHED AT HATFIELD,

OCTOBER, 20, 1807.

AT THE OPENING

OF

## HATFIELD BRIDGE.

.....  
BY JOSEPH LYMAN, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN HATFIELD.  
.....

.....

NORTHAMPTON,  
PRINTED BY WILLIAM BUTLER,  
1807.

AT a legal meeting of the Proprietors of Hatfield Bridge,  
holden by adjournment, at the house of Dr. Daniel White,  
in Hatfield, on the 20th Oct. 1807,

Voted that Samuel F. Dickinson, Esq. Mr. Nathaniel  
Smith, and Major Caleb Hubbard, be a committee, to re-  
turn the thanks of this Corporation to the Rev. Dr. Lyman,  
for his elegant and appropriate Sermon, this day delivered,  
and to request a copy thereof for the press.

Attest.

CALVIN MERRILL Clerk.

ISAIAH, LXII. 10.

*Go through, go through the gates ; prepare ye the way of the people : cast up, cast up the highway ; gather out the stones ; lift up a standard for the people.*

THE ministers of Christ, when called to address assemblies which bear his name and own his authority, should improve the opportunity to promote the interests of his kingdom, to honour the wisdom and goodness of his dispensations, and to excite the confidence of his people in his promises of grace and salvation to sinners. The events which take place, the counsels and labours, the plans and enterprizes of men, all have an immediate or more remote influence upon the kingdom of our Redeemer, and tend to bring forward the future peace and enlargement of the christian church, and that purity and felicity which a guilty world is to obtain under the administration of Immanuel. To him are the concerns of men committed : To him all things are subordinate : All creatures are his agents to accomplish his wise purposes, and to prepare the way for a fulfilment of his promises of rest and glory to a world long lost in folly, wickedness and woe. By his inscrutable counsels and operations, Christ has from the beginning been preparing the way for the triumphs of his mercy in the restoration of our miserable race, to purity of heart, and the rich enjoyment of divine protection and love. By his wisdom and power, the ruler of nations, the friend of men, the redeemer of sinners gives every event a certain direction to promote the ends of his moral government in bringing forward the full manifestations of the Father's love to wretched sinners, and in exalting the kingdom of grace upon the ruins of all the power, enterprize, and success of his adversaries. It is Christ's care that those hostile exertions which in every age, are directed against his kingdom, shall help forward his designs and establish his infrustrable decrees. The wrath of man will praise him.

The progress and success of the devils power shall terminate in the confirmation and radiant splendor of the kingdom of righteousness. Although he tarry, yet, confidently, wait for him. The joyous end will come, it will not tarry beyond the time appointed. Wisdom will lead us to contemplate creatures as his agents and revolutions as rolling onward his counsels of love to men. He will employ the devices and labours of men to terminate the reign of sin and misery in our world, and to hasten the blessed day when “ the New-Jerusalem shall come down  
“ from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned  
“ for her husband.”

In the chapter of our text the prophet labours to confirm our hearts in the promises God has made to his redeemed church and calls upon us to offer up our prayers and to lend our diligent co-operations for the accomplishment of the good things he has spoken of Zion, the city of our solemnities. To animate our exertions and hopes he reminds us of the oath of God to nourish, protect and save his heritage. “ The Lord hath sworn by his right  
“ hand and by the arm of his strength, surely I will no  
“ more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies, and  
“ the sons of the stranger shall not drink the wine for  
“ which thou hast laboured : But they that have gath-  
“ ered it shall eat it and praise the Lord ; and they that  
“ have brought together shall drink it in the courts of my  
“ holiness.

That the kind purposes of God’s oath may be effected, and covenanted blessings be secured to mankind, the prophet urgently calls upon all to rouse their attention and summon their energies to this great and good work. “ Go through, go through the gates ; prepare ye the  
“ way of the people, cast up, cast up the high way ; gath-  
“ er out the stones ; lift up a standard for the people.”

The active zeal with which Christ will inspire the hearts of men to forward his designs, as the season of his second coming to bless the world approaches, is represented under the image of a populous city, full of bustle and stir and ardent labour, the inhabitants passing and re-passing in clusters, through the gates, repairing the high-

ways and opening new avenues for the admission and accommodation of the multitudes coming to join their community and dwell within their walls. Vigorous will be the exertions to win new subjects to the Saviour's standard, to enrol them denizens of Zion, and furnish to them the privileges of his saving goodness. A glorious standard will be erected by his servants to guide men to their refuge, to cover them from dangers, and to assure them of rich and unspeakable blessings. Zion has faithful promises, that in her future glory the earth shall be full of the knowledge, love and enjoyment of God; the people will be all righteous and have an abundance of peace, length of days, health and joy. The earth shall be full of people, the seasons will be meliorated, the soil be rendered prolific and the arts and occupations of men shall promote the population of the world by furnishing a rich supply for all their wants. The useful and productive arts of life, health and temperate pleasures shall be cultivated and carried to perfection. The evils which now assail us, impair health and rob us of our joys, disturb our union and safety and waste life, will in the course of providence be removed. The means and ordinances of religion will be improved and succeeded in advancing all the social, moral and christian virtues to the summit of earthly perfection. Of these benefits prophecy assures us where it predicts in beautiful figurative language, "That Holiness shall be written upon the bells of their horses." Even the relaxations and amusements of life will be turned to the noble purposes of increasing and perfecting the service of God and the pure delights of his people. Nothing will be left to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain: And this holy mountain shall fill the whole earth.

Scarcely can calculation reach the accumulated numbers of men under the triumphant reign of our Immanuel. Wars shall cease under the whole heaven, and universal peace shall reserve for population the millions which in every age are now falling by the edge of the sword. Temperance and sobriety shall banish the inroads of disease, and rescue from pestilence her annual prey.— The facilities of gaining subsistence, and the honors

paid to marriage shall multiply the families and tribes of men. How substantial the felicities of that period in which the shield of providence shall protect men from harm, and the operations of his grace and spirit shall purify their hearts and rescue their lives from the excesses of vice & those subsequent evils which flow from human depravity. None of the people shall say "*I am sick,*" and little boys and girls, engaged in their innocent amusements, shall fill the streets of the holy city? The wearisome toils of life shall cease, and the salutary labours of industry shall be crowned with the efficient blessing of the Almighty. To this blessed era the eyes of good men look forward with delight: For these joyous events will the humane and benevolent labour and pray: Believing souls will wait on God, plead his promise and his oath, and supplicate his power and grace to hasten the renovation and happiness of man, and the manifestation of his own goodness. Attentive christians will watch the signs of the times, and the footsteps of their Redeemer's providence. When they see the mighty preparations of the Lord in bringing forward the peace and glory of Zion, they will wonder, adore and praise.

For thousands of years it has been a season of humiliation, darkness and misery to man. He who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience has exercised an extensive sway over the nations, filled the world with violence, wasting and death, with crimes and miseries.— Creation has groped for light and groaned for deliverance. Thus far hath the Lord suffered the adversary to prevail, that the power and grace of our Deliverer may appear more wonderful and his triumph more illustrious. The Lord hath neither forgotten nor forsaken the earth. Zion is engraven on his heart and on the palms of his hands. Partial interpositions and salvations have been earnest of futures victory. The immutability of his promise and oath teaches his children confidently to hope, "That the set time to favor Zion will come." In the course of events, in the changes, discoveries and improvements which have taken place among men, the diligent observer will see the certain prog-



refs of Christ's government towards the destruction of his enemies, the mitigation of human miseries, the recovery of man from guilt and ruin, and their reinstatement in that love of God, that safety and happiness for which his grace can so abundantly qualify them.

What do we now discover to animate our hopes, that the darkness which hath covered the earth is vanishing away, and that light will soon visit the habitations of men. Here the fearful and unbelieving with their boding apprehensions and cavilling doubts, would arrest my argument and enfeeble your hopes in the near approach of the felicity of man by the enlargement of Zion. To damp our glowing expectations, they say, When were the arts of infidelity, the efforts of irreligion, impiety, human depravity and profligacy more strenuously and successfully employed? Do you not see the tender feelings of the heart obliterated, moral sentiment deeply depraved and a disorganizing system of demoralization spread over the civilized world. The best institutions of religion, of civil and social intercourse are enfeebled, disgraced and almost annihilated. See you not the wit and ingenuity, the talent and enterprize of man devoted to schemes of vice and folly, the ready instruments of human degradation and wretchedness? See you not the boundless resources of human art and enterprize absorbed in measures of wasting and destruction? The means of human gratification are converted into instruments of subjugation, of carnage and desolation. The barriers of safety, and institutions most valuable and necessary to man are laid prostrate in the dust. The world is overwhelmed with those sufferings which are most dreadful and ruinous. The inhabitants of the earth, employed as their own executioners, are greedily plucking down ruin upon their own heads. Men's hearts fail them through fear of the evils which are coming upon them; and they groan under evils which they have neither skill to evade nor power to remove. The face of the civilized world is pale with amazement at the intrusion of the horrors of the barbarous ages and the scorpion lashes of a relentless despotism.

Asks the scoffing sceptic, Are these the forerunners of man's renovation? These the presages of the coming and kingdom of the Prince of Peace? They are.

The fourth beast which arose out of the sea, dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly, which had great iron teeth and devoured and break in pieces and stamped the residue under his feet is finishing his power and dominion among men. His authority was established when the Roman Commonwealth had subdued Perseus, the last Monarch of the Grecian dynasty. With an unprincipled and savage barbarity the Roman beast subverted and wasted the kingdoms of the world; and when no food could be longer found among other nations, he turned his rage upon his own bowels, harrassed and butchered the citizens of Rome, and the tributary nations, and deluged the whole empire with wasting, misery and woe. These wrongs and distresses of men led them to sigh and pant after deliverance. They had in these conflicts learned the inefficacy of Grecian philosophy and Roman virtue to recover men from wickedness and misery. They looked and longed for a Saviour to come, to enlighten and save a world lying in the depths of infamy, suffering and despair. The triumphs of Roman usurpation and the griefs and anguish of men, under wrongs and injuries; taught them their wickedness, their impotence and wretchedness; and prepared them to welcome the approach of that great Deliverer whom the nations had so long expected. Thus the distresses of men under the tyranny of the beast prepared the way of the Lord before his face. They were the forerunners of the nativity of the Son of God who was then born to redeem and save a perishing world. In like manner, the present wrongs and sufferings of mankind under the cruel dominion of this same beast, whose power is continued in the French empire, which has nearly swallowed up the ten kingdoms of Europe, these wrongs and sufferings of mankind are a fit preparation for the second coming of the Lord Jesus to spread his glorious kingdom over the earth. The perplexities and

woes of men are calculated and designed to prepare the world for the propagation of the gospel of peace and reconciliation among all nations.

In the present darkness and distress of men, we are taught, with unerring certainty, the errors of a sceptical philosophy, a boasting illuminism and a *rational* christianity. By following these guides men have lost their way, imbibed corrupt opinions, their morals are grossly depraved and their lives are stained with crimes and they are enveloped in doubt, darkness and despair. We see when the truth of the gospel is forsaken, the long tried and salutary institutions of society are subverted and the security and peace of nations are destroyed, how men's best inheritances are torn from them, and their tenderest connections are dissolved. We see how old empires and principalities vanish at the approach of violence and usurpation; how the liberties of men, tainted with the breath of licentiousness, will expire under the magic rod of faction and anarchy. It is owing to the predominance of sceptical principles, that we live in an age of degradation, and see mushroom emperors, kings, princes and dukes arising out of the ashes of civil government and freedom. We see our world tortured with convulsions, and the friends of human dignity and happiness bathed in tears and covered with sackcloth, while they contemplate the evils which infidel philosophy and an impious apostasy from the christian faith have brought upon this polluted, debased world. — But when the devil comes down in great wrath it is because his time is short.— Do you hear the voice of the Almighty shaking terribly the nations? These, blessed be God, these are the harbingers sent to prepare the way for the peace and glory of his church. God will work when men make void his law; when his enemies exalt themselves, he will show himself to be higher than they. Do not, christians, do not in dark and gloomy times, despair of the promises; be not weary in waiting upon God: *For in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not.*

I have spoken, thus diffusely of these afflicting evils, these trials of the faith and patience of the saints, that I

might persuade you to view them not in a disheartening but in an animating point of light, as the preludes of Zion's better days : to remind you, that as in the natural so in the moral world, the darkest moments usher in the dawning of the day.

Let us now turn our eyes from the glittering tokens of Christ's coming and kingdom; *these awful terrors that attend the wondrous way which brings his blessings down.*— Our attention is invited for a few minutes, to more pleasing tokens that Christ will soon return to bless the earth, with truth and peace. Blessed be his name for his gracious assurances, that he will turn all the devices and hostilities of his enemies upon their own heads, and the measures which they pursue to marr his glory and subvert his cause, shall terminate in their confusion and in the salvation and thanksgivings of his own people.— Let us then trace the footsteps of his providence and discover the consoling evidences of Christ's care, and interest in the concerns and happiness of men ; that all his dispensations are in a gradual, but sure progress to the future enlargement and glory of his church upon earth. With what hope and joy must we contemplate the direct and instituted means which his children and friends are actively and zealously employing to spread far and wide the tidings of salvation by furnishing resources and using exertions and pouring out prayers for the success of the everlasting gospel? What numbers supported by christian liberality, aided by pious supplications and warmed with heavenly sympathy and zeal, are now running to and fro in the earth that the knowledge and love of Jesus may be increased. This is a great and glorious theme. It is a theme which employs the hearts and tongues of saints and angels. Altho' I cannot now enter upon it, yet, your consciences would reproach me should I not mention it as the principal and most hopeful dispensation of providence by which, with the aids of the Holy Spirit, the gospel is to acquire its greatest success and the renovation of this world is to be obtained. Leaving this delightful subject, let me turn your attention to those events, in the kingdom of provi-

dence, which presage the speedy appearance of Christ to bless his church and save the nations of the earth.

Among the preparatory means and happy presages of Christ's universal dominion over the hearts and lives of men, we may reckon all those useful discoveries of former and present times, those inventions of human art and genius by which the intercourse of the nations is made easy and expeditious, by which the means of subsistence are increased and the wants of men are more readily relieved and their numbers and comforts multiplied. The multitudes of the saved are new sources of glory to Christ and of rapturous joy to his friends. Well therefore may we take into our account, as preparatory steps towards the world's future felicity and glory, all those improvements in society which add to the subsistence and accommodation of men and multiply their numbers in the earth.

Now consider how providence is preparing the way for those countless multitudes who shall inherit the earth in the reign of peace and righteousness. What a facility has the *invention of printing* added to the acquisition of learning and science, to the attainment of knowledge in all our social, civil and religious interests and concerns? What a diminution of labor, and what a radiance of light has resulted from this important discovery?

The discovery of the *magnet* and the application of its mysterious powers has made cheap and easy, frequent and safe the intercourse of nations, and brought into contiguity the most remote countries and regions of the earth. Incalculable are the improvements which have been made in the arts of navigation and trade, and in the wealth and enjoyments of nations since the magnet has unfolded its powers and uses to mankind. A wide door and effectual has been opened for the progress of trade, the acquisition of wealth, the exchange of the earth's bounties and for cementing salutary connexions between the various and distant tribes of men. Friend of Jesus! look and see what facilities are derived from this discovery for sending the gospel of peace, with its unspeakable blessings, to all your brethren who dwell on distant con-

tinents and in the islands of the sea? The wealth of nations, so much augmented by modern discoveries and improvements, is now applied as fuel to men's lusts, to inflame avarice, to foster ambition and to feed sensuality; but this wealth, in the scheme of Christ's government, has its important use. In that day, when all shall be righteous and sincerely love one another, the wealth of the nations shall be devoted to human happiness and to cultivate in all hearts, the love of God and man. In this application of the wealth flowing from recent inventions and enterprizes doth our Lord say, *The silver and the gold are mine.* Consider, my hearers, how much property is accumulated by men; then drawn out of their hands and applied to the purposes of ambition and vanity, of war and destruction: how much money is every year expended to butcher and pillage and plunder your brethren of mankind? Presently the wealth and forces of the Gentiles shall be turned unto the Lord, and then how much substantial, permanent, never ending good shall this wealth, now worse than lost, procure to our world.— With the eye of christian faith, let us, then, see, admire and approve of the activity, investigation, exertion and enterprize of men, in pursuing projects of public accommodation, in opening new channels of intercourse, new sources of gain, new inventions to reduce the quantity of labour and increase the products of art. Let us with pleasure see them opening new roads, cultivating new discoveries; and turning all the mechanic powers to some of the useful purposes of life. The surprising progress made in this country and Europe, to render easy, cheap and safe, the conveyance of persons and property, the establishment of *packets and stages, the erection of useful public buildings and bridges* are to be attributed to the wisdom of providence in ripening and preparing the world for a better state of society in some approaching age.

An intelligent friend,\* speaking of the uncommon zeal and activity of the people in opening canals, mak-

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\*The late pious and venerable Timothy Stone, of Lebanon, Connecticut.

ing roads and establishing stages, said “ *This labour will not be lost ; we are at work for those who will live in the Millenium.*” Could we all be persuaded to make our discoveries, exertions and enterprizes useful to others ; did we calculate upon a large scale for the comfort and preservation of life, and for the interest of future generations, we should have the satisfaction of an approving conscience as working for Christ and his kingdom ; and then we might be assured that our labour would not be in vain in the Lord.

*My Christian friends and brethren,*

While we contemplate the wisdom and goodness of our adorable Saviour in directing the dispensations of providence, and, the inventions and labours of men to the benevolent purposes of His moral government, and in preparing the world for the full participation of his promised grace, let us not pass unnoticed those wonderful improvements and extensive enterprizes which the present age has witnessed in the construction of numerous, magnificent Bridges over our most rapid and dangerous rivers. The number, the strength and security of these structures exceed the most sanguine hopes and calculations of our fathers. Half a century passed, credulity itself would not have meditated these enterprizes nor dreamed of their success. The throwing of Bridges across the wide flowing and rapid waters of *the Connecticut* would, a few years since, have been treated as an ideal and romantic projection : But we are this day convened to acknowledge the goodness of providence in the finishing, and opening of the fifteenth Bridge erected over that magnificent and potent stream.

This is the happy event, which has brought us into this house of God, to make our humble acknowledgments to him, for succeeding this expensive and beneficial work ; to indulge our friendly feelings towards one another, to testify our cordial approbation of this laborious effort of human skill, perseverance and public spirit ; and to unite our sincere wishes and cordial prayers, *that the benefits of this work may be permanent and co-extensive with the most sanguine expectations of the proprietors, patrons and execu-*

*tors of this laudable enterprize.* It is a good work:— May the good Lord add his blessing to it, and preserve it, as one among his innumerable instruments of promoting the enjoyments, of exciting the thankfulness and of increasing the filial dependence of his creatures upon his unerring wisdom and fatherly kindness.

In recollecting the progress of this labour, we should notice with submissive resignation, the many delays, embarrassments and losses which have attended the execution of it. But all these embarrassments and losses we should hold in small account, had not the inscrutable counsels of our Father in heaven made this work the occasion of the sudden and disastrous death of our valuable friend, *Mr. Solomon Boltwood.* This active patron and principal of the design, precious to his family and connexions, and a valuable member of society, was here called to finish his earthly toils, and go into the immediate presence of his God and Judge. Thus is the life of man endangered in his most useful employments; thus our pleasures are interspersed with griefs; thus would God teach us all, that we have a work to do, infinitely more important and interesting than any worldly project.

It would be neither pious nor reasonable, that our grief at the losses and bereavments which have accompanied this labour of love, should stifle and suppress our temperate joys on the completion of a design of such public utility.

We, gratefully, approve that constant perseverance, active zeal and expensive liberality which inspired *the Proprietors* of this structure to encounter, and surmount those various embarrassments and difficulties which threatened the abortion of their enterprize; and that enduring patience which enabled them to bring to maturity the object of their wishes.

*The directors* to whom the management of this concern was entrusted are for their fidelity entitled to the esteem and approbation of the public, and of their immediate constituents.

*The Contractors, Artificers and laborers* who have



*finished* this work, have given lively specimens of mechanical skill, of diligence, and of punctual honor and honesty in executing their trust, and have merited and obtained the confidence of those who had committed to them their important interests and their property.

I am warranted to tender the sincere thanks of the Directors and Coporation, to *those numerous individuals*, in this and neighboring towns, who have gratuitously aided this weighty enterprize by pecuniary contributions and personal labours. To these pecuniary aids and personal labours are the public much indebted for this useful accommodation.

We, in particular and with gratitude, acknowledge the generous and paternal interposition of the *Legislature of this Commonwealth*, by granting to the corporation a Lottery for raising ten thousand dollars to relieve the Proprietors, oppressed with their losses, and to ensure to the community a most important benefit which was in hazard of being lost.

May the *liberal benefactors* of this design, enjoy the pleasing satisfaction of seeing all their benevolent wishes completely realized in the most durable and extensive advantages to society and individuals.

HATFIELD-BRIDGE, this day opened for public use, may be viewed as a specimen of human art and skill, of what great and noble projects may be accomplished by liberal zeal and a constant pertinacious perseverance. It is an ornamental monument of the public spirit of the projectors and of the talents and ingenuity of those who have executed the work.

This is not a monument to perpetuate the name of some imperial butcher who has founded his fame and his greatness on the bones of his subjects and slaves, who claims rank in the page of history for having trampled down authorities, sacked cities, impoverished and made desolate countries and kingdoms, once flourishing in peace and joy and plenty. This is not a monument raised at the expence of the freedom and independence of nations and cemented with the tears and blood of men, a standing memento of passed sufferings and of the present servitude and degradation of God's rational creatures.

No. THIS BRIDGE erected under the fostering care of Providence is devoted to those benevolent purposes which accord with and promote the designs of God's love to men. It is erected, to be a bond of friendly union to the citizens of neighbouring towns—to facilitate and render safe and expeditious social intercourse—to preserve valuable property from peril and loss—to relieve from solicitous apprehensions and torturing fears the minds of travellers and their friends—and to be the useful instrument of saving the lives of men and animals.

Under these views, we may justly consider this structure, *an essential public benefit*. It is coincident with the goodness of God to men. It is not a futile, vain effort of human pride. It is not the progeny of avarice. It is not an instrument of loss and suffering. It is to be reckoned among those useful labours of men, and those kind events of providence by which the aggregate sum of human felicity is increased and the subsistence and numbers of mankind are multiplied.

May the God of heaven and the Redeemer of men own, accept and bless the labour of our hands and make this, one link of that golden chain which is suspended from his throne and reaches down to this footstool.

May this be one of those numberless, effectual preparatory steps which shall lead on the auspicious day of man's renovation and blessedness, of that day in which all the inventions and employments of men, all their faculties and property shall be HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

And now, my friends and fellow christians, permit me to conclude this address with my fervent prayers to the God of all grace, that all you of this assembly may be as a city compact together which cannot be broken down; that you may be builded upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: In whom all the building, being fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord. And when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, may you have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.—Amen.



